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COMMUNITY NESTS

BY

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OTTAWA, CANADA

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COMMUNITY NESTS

by

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COMMUNITY type nests for laying hens are a new departure in the field of poultry house equipment. They have proved to be very popular with poultrymen who have used them. Nests that are found in poultry houses throughout the country are many and varied. They range all the way from apple boxes tacked to the wall or orange boxes set in tiers, to elaborate single-compartment nests built according to various plans. Whatever the type of nest used, however, there is generally the problem of proper cleaning. The small size of each nest in the single-compartment type results in only one or two inches of nesting material. Crowding and fighting for possession of favoured nesting compartments results in broken eggs which soil the nesting material. One broken egg may mean a dozen soiled ones within an hour. Cleaning soiled eggs takes up a good many hours of the housewife's time in the course of a year as well as resulting in lower grades for otherwise good quality eggs.

Enterprising poultrymen in various parts of the continent have developed a community type of nest to overcome this problem of soiled and broken eggs and to facilitate the collecting of eggs generally. Basically, this consists of one large nest usually 24 inches wide and anywhere from 4 to 10 feet long. The idea behind this type of construction is that one large nest with 4 to 6 inches of nesting material will eliminate the problem of a number of hens crowding into a single type nest and fighting for possession. Various types of entrances are recommended. In general, however, one entrance 8 inches by 8 inches should

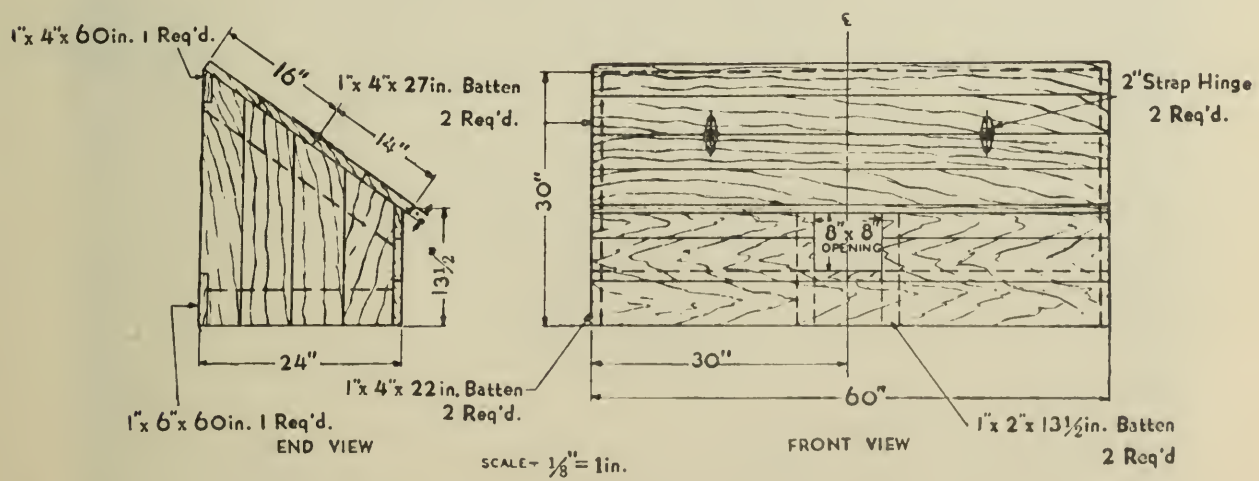

Fig. 1. This figure shows the construction details for the community nesting box. The next figure shows the construction details for the platform upon which this nesting box sits. (Plan adapted from Mass. State College plan)

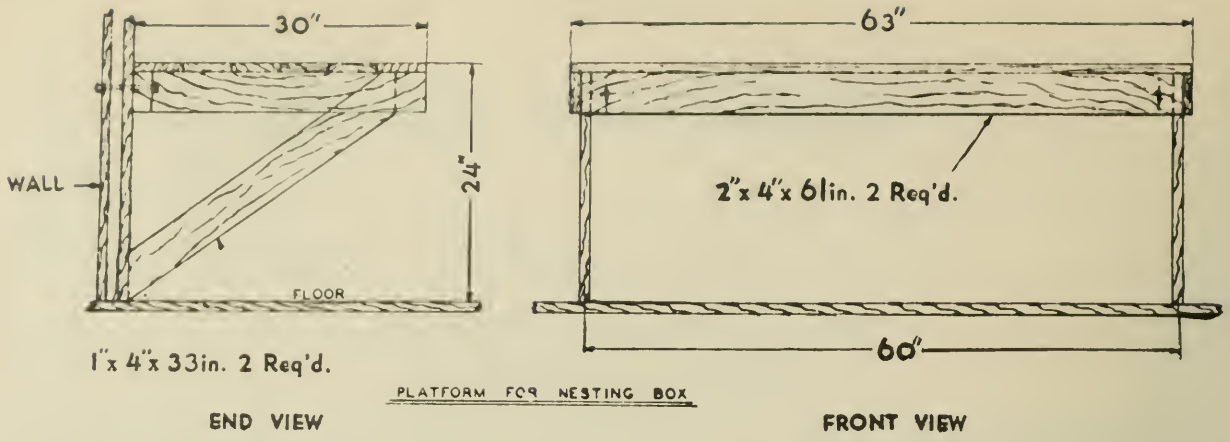

Fig. 2. Construction details for the platform for community nesting box. (Plan adapted from Mass. State College plan)

be used for nests up to 6 feet in length. Longer nests may have an entrance in each end, although single entrances in long nests have given satisfactory results. Community nests are usually constructed without a floor. They are placed on a permanent platform so that they can be lifted off and the platform swept or scraped clean. The type of construction shown here also dispenses with a back in the nest. The nesting box is placed against the wall thus eliminating the necessity for a back.

Community nests of the type described in this bulletin have been used at the Dominion Experimental Station, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and have proved highly satisfactory. Experience has shown that they are much superior to any single-compartment type of nest. Each nest is 5 feet long by 24 inches wide. This length is preferred because of the ease of removal for cleaning. In addition, this size is sufficient for small flocks up to fifty birds. For flocks of one hundred birds, two sections can be placed end to end on a continuous platform. The slope of the cover has been found to be sufficient to prevent the birds from perching on it. It will be noted that the end boards run vertically.

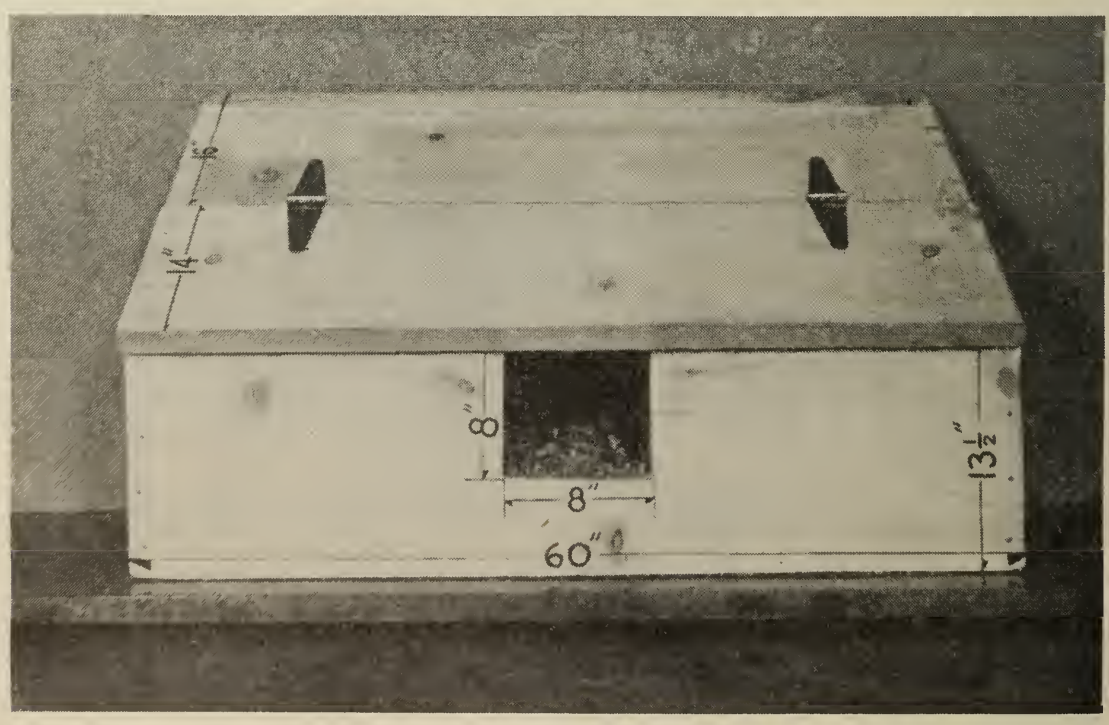

Fig. 3. Front view of a model of a community nest showing actual measurements.

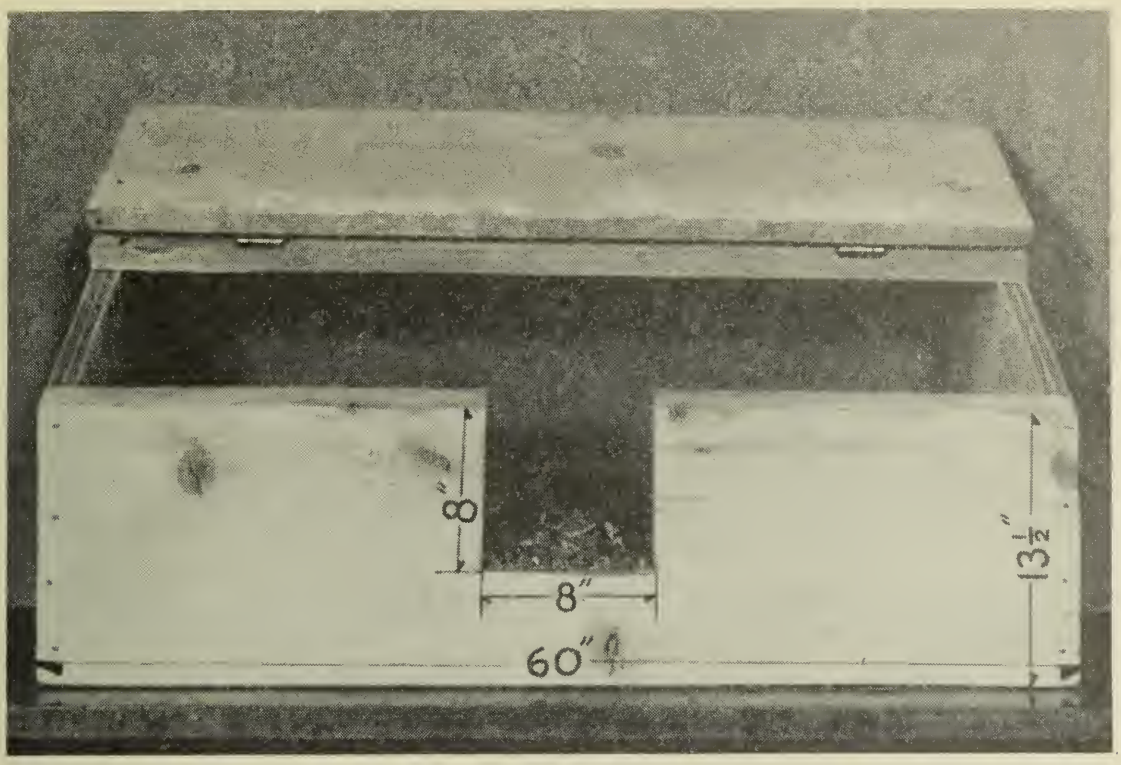

Fig. 4. This view shows the nesting box with the lid open. This type of construction greatly facilitates the collection of eggs.

This is necessary because of the backless construction. In the type used at this Station, the 6-inch walk in front of the entrance has been carried the full length of the platform. Some operators have reduced this to a 3-foot walk in front of the entrance. After the pullets have become used to the nest, a piece of heavy sacking should be hung over the inside of the entrance opening to further darken the nest and make it more acceptable. This piece of sacking should be slit

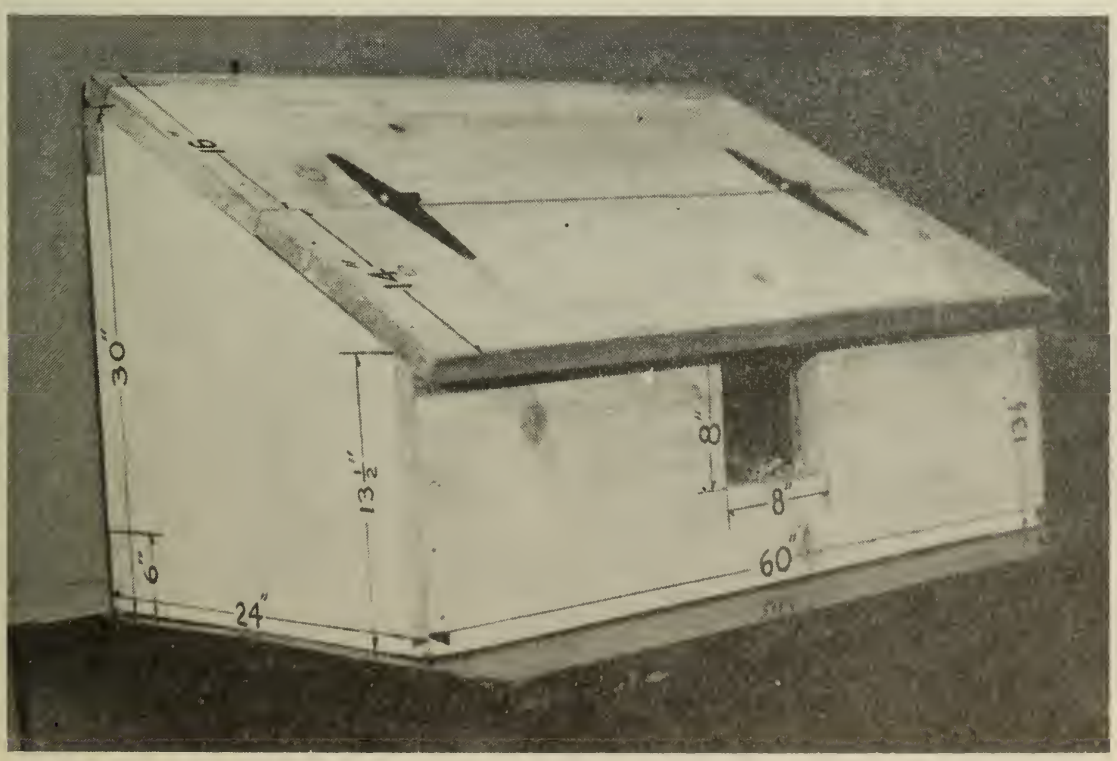

Fig. 5. Additional view of a model of a community nest.

Fig. 6. Additional view of a model of a community nest.

upwards for about three-quarters of its length. Observations have shown that only the darker ends of the nest box will be used where the entrance is not covered with sacking.

The type of nesting material to be used in community nests is important. Wood shavings are recommended as being most satisfactory although clean dry

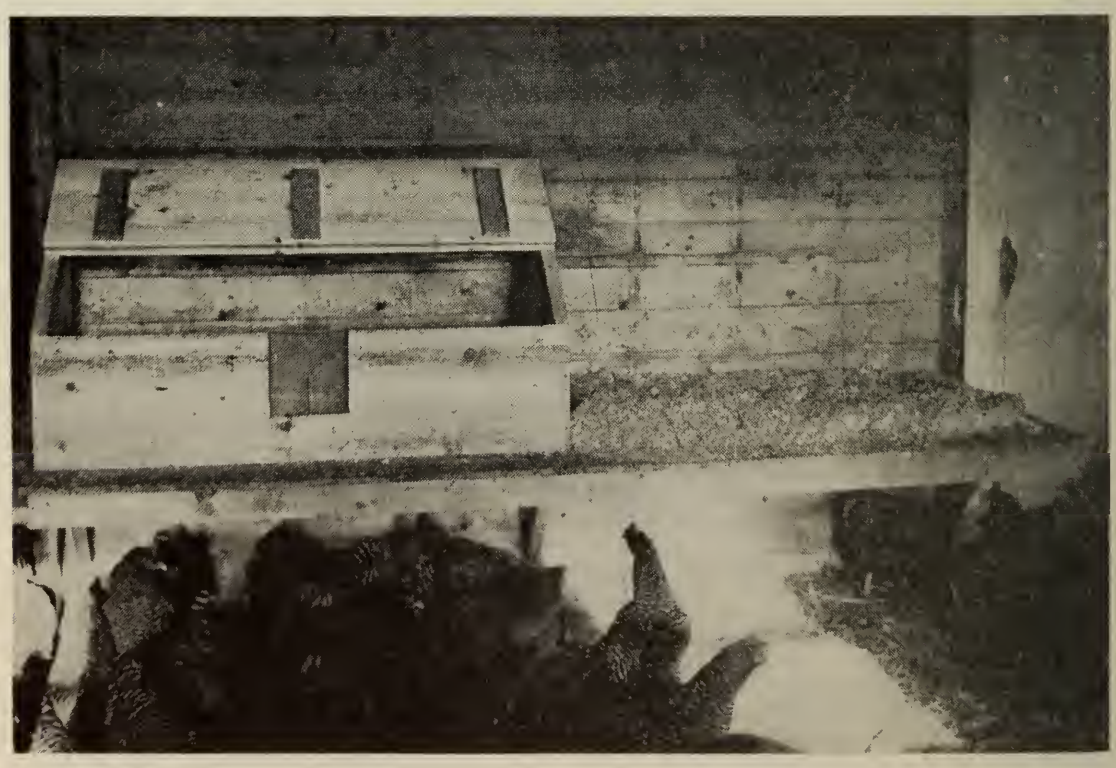

Fig. 7. This view shows the ease with which the nests may be cleaned. The nesting box on the right has been removed. The soiled shavings can now be swept onto the floor and the box replaced and filled with fresh shavings.

sawdust and short cut straw have been used with good results. Long straw should *not* be used. In practically all cases where these nests have been reported as not giving satisfaction the cause has been traced to the use of uncut straw.

A few observations on the results of the use of these nests are given below.

1. Broken and dirty eggs have been reduced to a minimum.
2. The gathering of eggs is greatly facilitated.
3. Changing nesting material is the work of only a few minutes.
4. As many as fifteen hens have been observed sitting visiting at one time in a nest 5-feet long.
5. The large amount of nesting material provides a door mat for hens with dirty feet.
6. Ventilation of the nesting compartment can be provided by drawing the nest one-half inch forward on the platform.
7. Many of the advantages of this type of nest will be lost if the nesting compartment is not kept well filled with proper nesting material at all times.
8. Nesting materials that have been found most satisfactory are wood shavings, sawdust or short cut straw.
9. Painting the nests, platform, and wall behind the nests with creosote has provided excellent mite control.

Community nests have been shown to be superior to most other types of nests. They will not, however, eliminate the necessity for the collecting of eggs at regular intervals. If eggs are allowed to accumulate in large numbers, broken and dirty eggs will result and quality will deteriorate.

Copies of this bulletin are available from your nearest Dominion Experimental Farm or Station. At the same time a copy of Publication 782 entitled "Eggs" should be secured as a guide in the production of high quality eggs.

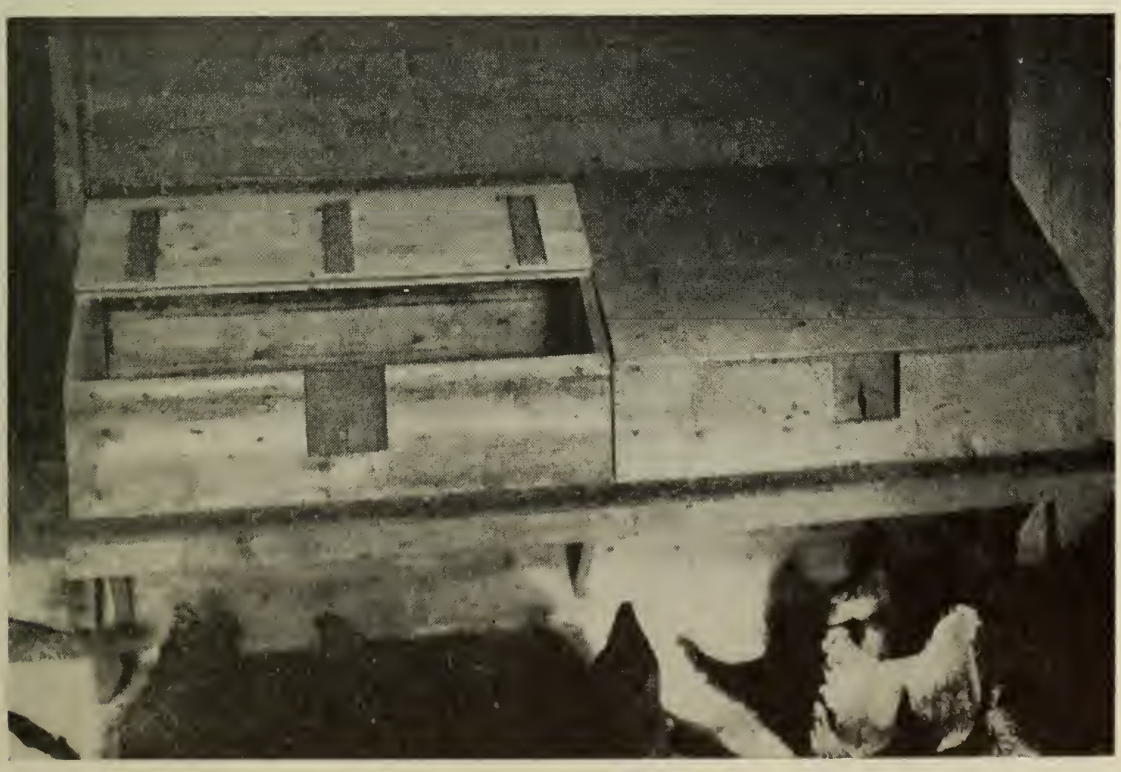

Fig. 8. A pair of community nests in operation in a laying house. Note the sacking used to cover the front opening. The nest on the left has been opened to show the ease with which eggs may be gathered.

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